

How a Teenager Fell in Love With Healthy Eating



MY JOURNEY - SHAMBAVI DHALL

*My Journey - Shambavi
Dhall*

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Dedication and Inspiration

Dedication

I want to thank the following people for helping with the foundation of my education and life:

- Aaron and Moshe Renert (Founders of Renert school)
- Mrs. Agopian, Mr. Deiter, and Mrs. Kinley from Renert School
- Teachers at Calgary Science, Brentwood Elementary and Amador Valley High School
- My parents, who supported, challenged and encouraged me to write this book
- My friends who provided several teen perspectives on healthy food

Inspiration

To pick a writing style for this book, I read and listened to the following books as per the recommendation of my parents:

- The Compound Effect by Darren Hardy
- Rework by Jason Fried
- State of Sport for Business by Mark Cuban
- Think and Grow Rich by Napoleon Hill

The message in this book is incredibly powerful and can change the health of all teens worldwide - if carefully read. It can contribute significantly in removing obesity, diabetes and other diseases if every reader were to apply the learning's from this book.

Happy reading!

Chapter 1- Why a Book?

Why would a teen like me think of writing a book on nutrition? I am no expert on nutrition, but I have transformed myself in the last 4-5 years while observing the eating habits of my friends, parents, family friends and society.

During my research, I was unable to find any book showing the world of nutrition from a teen's point of view or one that shares a success story as inspiration for others. So, I decided to write a book to fill this gap. Before this, my way of spreading information about nutrition was through my blog, My Nutrition Meter, in which I continue to write new, interesting and useful information I find during my research. Some feedback I have gotten on my blog is that the information I share sometimes goes sideways does not focus on primarily on teens. With the help of a book, I will be able to accurately give the message to my fellow teens and their parents.

How I Fell in Love with Healthy Eating does not share healthy recipes or a ton of different nutritional facts as you can already get sufficient information with the click of a button through Google - why bore everyone with more?

The internet is a great resource to find nutrition facts like the specific number of calories in the foods we eat so that I will leave most of those calculations to it. However, I will still share the most breathtaking facts. Instead of providing nutritional facts, I will ask questions that usually do not come to the mind of the average teen. These questions are meant to trigger and reach the subconscious mind of a teen and force them to start considering the types of foods they put into their bodies. Throughout this book, I will add a dash of nutritional facts to strengthen my arguments.

If you are even a bit curious and inquisitive, you will reap abundant benefits through attempting to find answers. Another advantage in joining my journey is that we will not only improve our own health but also make a significant social impact.

I have made a conscious decision to keep this book free. I know that I could have earned some money by writing and selling this book to the public, but I wanted this book to be available to everyone – for no cost. Teens should not even be asked to take out 99 cents from their pockets to change their future. My goal for writing this book is not to earn money, but to improve the health of my fellow teens worldwide. There will be many other opportunities in life for me to earn money.

You will see a lot of quotes in this book that I have captured from my parents and the internet while researching for my blog. Sometimes I picked the quote verbatim, but a few times I have applied quotes to health, even if it was for some other purpose.

This book is an attempt to reach out to teens and explain the psychology of why we keep eating processed, sugary foods and how to overcome it. It is easier for me than many psychologists because I am a teen in 2017. I have spent a lot of time thinking of why I used to not care about eating healthy, nutritious food, and my reasons must be similar, if not the same, as many other teens. Once people

begin to understand why this is happening, the whole society will be able to work together and change the way we look at food and decide what to eat. Let's start our journey together.

Chapter 2 - My Family's Background

My family consists of three people: my Dad, Mom, and I. I can easily say we are best friends as we take liberties with each other and push one another like coaches without understanding the boundaries and emotions of the athlete. Sometimes bad reactions happen, but we reconcile within an hour or a day later at the most. Let me take you to both my parents' backgrounds. This is an important part of my message so you know how I got my ideas and you'll also be able to relate since we all have our own stories at home.

As a child, a typical weekend for my mother would include many types of delicious and gourmet Indian food and snacks. A typical weekend would start with my grandmother making Bhatura/Puries (fluffy fried bread) in the morning, followed by Rajma (a bean) with rice at lunch and Cutlets or Pakoras/Samosas in the evening. The beauty of this habit in the foodie family was that they thought they went light for

supper with some lentils and bread. Whenever we talked about mom's eating schedule as a kid, our house filled with laughter. How can someone even think of eating dinner after three super heavy meals and fried snacks by 3 pm?

If you have not heard of these foods, then visualize someone, every weekend, going to a crazy restaurant called Heart Attack Grill, in Las Vegas, that serves a burger named the Octupole Bypass Burger containing a whopping 19,900 calories. That is how many calories the average teen should eat for almost 15 days. Sadly, the unhealthiness of my mother's childhood weekend diet nearly matched the horrifying foods at Heart Attack Grill. Her terrible eating habits continued until she went to a hostel during her undergrad years. It was there she realized the importance of eating healthier, or maybe it was just the fact that there were no other meal options.

If you want to know more information about this crazy restaurant watch this video:
https://youtu.be/hqf_SIQ3JAK

This unhealthy lifestyle continued until 15 years after her marriage when my father began introducing new healthier ways of eating.

My dad was eating and putting loads of junk into his body. He would attack dessert as if it would not exist tomorrow or will be banned by the government. I have seen some difficult discussions between my parents, after my Dad would wake up at night, go to the refrigerator and finish all the sweets/desserts, leaving nothing for my mother and I. Apart from having a sweet tooth; he was just fond of eating. Since my mom hates cooking (except for the scrambled egg she makes for me every morning filled with love), he took it upon himself to feed all of us and take care of himself - I guess.

And now about me and my overall personality, habits and how I came to be like this. I have just completed my sophomore year (Grade 10) in high school and am on the wrong side of the 4.0 GPA every high schooler desires. How much on the wrong side, I will leave to your imagination, but that does not matter for this book.

I am pleased and proud of my grades and performance at school as it has been an incredible journey, for 3-4 years ago, I was “in pieces,” as my favorite coach Aaron Renert would describe me. Even though he is the founder of an excellent private

school in Calgary Canada, I think of him as my coach as he challenged me (like what a terrific football coach would do), supported and nurtured me to build my confidence and improve my study habits. My parents always helped me by never asking me about my grades. They were just there to motivate me to move ahead one step at a time to eventually become a lifelong learner like they are. During these tough 3-4 years when I was transforming my personality, I was supported by various quotes in my study room and bedroom. The moment I yawned or slipped on the path to my goals, they would bring another quote to stick to my walls to reinforce these positive affirmations day and night. If I ever got irritated, they would start a conversation amongst themselves at home or in the car, to ensure that my brain would be full of positivity all the time. You can get some idea of Indian parents' nagging influence by watching a couple of TV episodes of "How to be Indie." I am just kidding as my parents are truly great and I am blessed to have them.

You may have noticed that the kind of books I have been reading or listening to are very uncommon at my age. I think interest in these topics is in my DNA as the constant discussion at home is on these topics.

So, talks in the car, dining table and gym are all their friendly lectures halls where I keep getting knowledge much like a nonsmoker get to smoke second hand.

I got irritated many times at first, but now I realize that they were right. Although this idea of quotes seemed worthless at that time, looking back, I have realized that all those motivational quotes entered my subconscious mind and unknowingly made it easier for me to keep fighting and transform my life by the foods I ate. If you are currently unaware about your subconscious mind and how it works, wait for a couple of chapters until I explain how it works and share with you how you can use it for your benefit.

I joined my father's transition from unhealthy to healthy before my mother could agree. It happened somewhere around 2011-2012. It is a good example of how being a kid; we can be positively influenced to join the right path. It is why I am dedicating this book to my parents and teens.

Chapter 3 - How It All Started

During a Toastmaster speech my father was listening to at his club, the speaker shared her story on how she blends fruits and vegetables in the morning and drinks it to refresh and energize herself and how she takes a bottled smoothie to her work every day. It is crazy to note how fast this one speech established the foundation for my entire family's turnaround. In matters of healthy food, my dad learns very quickly. This moment was critical for my whole family as my dad bought us a blender that very day so we could start juicing from the next morning onwards. That night was filled with nightmares for my mother and I as we did not know what was in store for us in the following day.

The next morning my dad woke up early to make the first green smoothie he had ever made in his life. With a loud noise, we anticipated that it was ready. We went to the kitchen, and there he was, smiling with enthusiasm. It was terrible! In fact, the consistency of the first smoothie was so thick that it could be called a Chutney or a Green Jam. We all

had to eat the smoothie with a spoon. We could not stop thinking about the disgusting blended veggies that would now be waiting for us each morning. My father, however, could not get a wink of sleep as he was so excited and held his expectations a little too high. After a few months of resistance, he gave in and stopped making these smoothies.

Around six months later, Mr. Arun Bhargava father of my friend Komal showed us his new Vitamix blender. It was the moment my dad was waiting his whole life, as he bought Vitamix the next day. Life has never been same after that. I can say now that buying this blender was the best decision my family has ever made for our health journey. It creates the perfect consistency for the vegetables and fruits by making it so thin and velvety. No more chunky smoothies! These new amazing, velvety smoothies were made from Kale, Spinach, and a couple of Oranges, Apple, and/or Pineapple with just water. They are nutritionally million times better than the store-bought juice we teens go for. I will still give some respect to Booster Juice, Jamba Juice and Vitality bowl where the smoothies, bowls consist somewhat of veggies and fruits, while mixing store bought juices. But still, these three places are much better than fast food restaurants. I support all three

of them, however I encourage you to go for a homemade Vitamix smoothie to receive the nutritional bonanza.

Chapter 4 - Bad Habits vs. Good Healthy Habits

Good habits take years to build, but bad habits take seconds to break the foundation of your years of hard work.

At a young age, my mother developed a habit of eating a sweet and savory snack with her afternoon/evening tea. It has been a common habit in her family for many years. After she got married to my dad, he unknowingly developed this habit too! (I have heard smoking also starts like this, but I never expected food habits to pass on like this as well). Eating junk food with tea is easy and can seem normal, whereas the opposite becomes a journey.

My teenage friend Jasmine Tharagan has contributed the following:

“The industry of junk food depends on the nature of the advertisement. Without proper advertising, even brands selling delicious food can vanish into

irrelevance. Ad drives us to consume food we know isn't good for us. It's safe to say that everyone has been tempted by the colors, descriptions, tastes, and smells of junk food; even though we know, it's unhealthy for us. I too, of course, am guilty of this. Even though I am aware the chips, chocolate and candy are not right for me, and in the long run, there is something so satisfyingly savory about the sweets and salty foods on supermarket shelves. It's the craving of flavors not found in 'healthy' food; the extremes of sweetness and spice that draw me in and lead me to consumption. It's the desire to taste something out of the ordinary, and perhaps the human body's susceptibility to sugar, a substance with an almost addictive effect. The thing is, while healthy food is good for your body and feels good in your body; junk food tastes good and therefore makes you feel good. In a way, we can achieve a food high by acceding the same desirable feeling through junk food versus healthy food, using the extreme flavors present in junk food but not healthy food. All in all, the combination of tempting advertising and unusual flavors provides the perfect niche for exploiting our body's ability to metabolize that which is good for us and that which is not."

Companies invest millions and team up with scientists to develop these junk foods and induce cravings in us.

“Did you ever wonder why you might find yourself craving cake, chips, and candy, but not broccoli? It’s not your fault. These foods are designed to make you want more and more of them because they are high in fat, salt, and sugar- ingredients that stimulate pleasure centers in the brain” Dr. Fuhrman.

The reason we form unhealthy habits is due to repeatedly eating junk food. James Clear quotes Steven Witherly nicely: on his website Steven Witherly is a food scientist who has spent the last 20 years studying what makes certain foods more addictive (and tasty) than others. Much of the science that follows is from his excellent report, <http://jamesclear.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/why-humans-like-junk-food-steven-witherly.pdf?x25662>

“According to Witherly, when you eat tasty food, two factors make the experience pleasurable.

First, there is the sensation of eating the food. It includes what it tastes like (salty, sweet, umami, etc.), what it smells like, and how it feels in your mouth. This last quality — known as “or sensation” — can be particularly important. Food companies will spend millions of dollars to discover the most satisfying level of crunch in a potato chip. Their scientists will test for the perfect amount of fizz in soda. These factors all combine to create the sensation that your brain associates with a food or drink.

The second factor is the actual macronutrient makeup of the food — the blend of proteins, fats, and carbohydrates that it contains. In the case of junk food, food manufacturers are looking for a perfect combination of salt, sugar, and fat that excites your brain and gets you coming back for more.”

James Clear clarifies: “This is where the psychobiology of junk food really works against you. When you eat something tasty (say, a bag of potato chips), your brain registers that feeling. The next time you see that food, smell that food, or even read about that food, your brain starts to trigger the memories and responses that came when you ate it.

These memories can actually cause physical responses like salivation and create the “mouth-watering” craving that you get when thinking about your favorite foods”.

Now let's go back to my story.

“Oh! I am in stress”, my dad yells when we stop him from eating sweets/desserts. It has been happening for years. Even for a person who continually drives us towards healthy food, it's hard for him to leave habits. He hides behind the excuse of ‘stress’ claiming that more sugar will help him and pleads us to let him eat unhealthy. My mother and I are currently working fixing this bad habit.

Although unhealthy habits are tough to break, it is still possible. The first step of breaking a bad habit is realizing that we don't need that snack to function. You will find a lot of advice on the following pages, so hold on to this thought!

To build a good habit, it is important to repeat the pattern several times with no slack or compromise and avoid negative people/media. It takes courage, will power and support from people around us.

An excellent book inspires the following two stories:
“You can win” by author Shiv Khera.

Story 1: “An eagle's egg in the nest of a prairie chicken. The egg hatched and the little eagle grew up thinking it was a prairie chicken. The eagle did what the prairie chickens did. It scratched in the dirt for seeds. It clucked and cackled. It never flew more than a few feet because that is what the prairie chickens did. One day he saw an eagle flying gracefully and majestically in the open sky. He asked the prairie chickens: "What is that beautiful bird?" The chickens replied, "That is an eagle. He is an outstanding bird, but you cannot fly like him because you are just a prairie chicken." So the eagle never gave it a second thought, believing that to be the truth. He lived the life of and died a prairie chicken, depriving himself of his heritage because of his lack of vision. What a waste! He was born to win but was conditioned to lose.” The same thing is true of most people

Story 2: “SOME PEOPLE ALWAYS LOOK FOR THE NEGATIVE. There was a hunter who bought a bird dog, the only one of its kind in the world. That could walk on water. He couldn't believe his eyes

when he saw this miracle. At the same time, he was very pleased that he could show off his new acquisition to his friends. He invited a friend to go duck hunting. After some time, they shot a few ducks, and the man ordered his dog to run and fetch the birds. All-day-long, the dog ran on water and kept fetching the birds. The owner was expecting a comment or a compliment about his amazing dog, but never got one. As they were returning home, he asked his friend had noticed anything unusual about his dog. The friend replied, "Yes, in fact, I did notice something unusual. Your dog can't swim." Some people always look at the negative side. Who is a pessimist? Pessimists “

There are many negative influences from media, society, fellow teens that you should stay away from. All of them make us feel cool with kool-aid, pop, chips, fried, fast food, etc. Today's teenagers learn from adult behavior and the media. They face a lot of peer pressure,. Many people are wrong in thinking that there is only peer pressure in fashion and makeup. Unknowingly we may be developing the junk food habit as it is more regular to go into any fast food restaurant than to sit and eat veggies/fruits with friends. I hope these fast food joints start offering some healthier options in the

future. I heard McDonalds is changing a bit and adding salads – although these salads are still processed and contain an overload of dressing, it is definitely an improvement. Let us make a group and influence these restaurants to carry healthy items too.

We are influenced by lot advertising from media on fast foods, it leads us to get sucked into unhealthy eating. When Food Network and Travel Channel do not show any healthy eating on any of their shows, it's difficult to win over these bad habits. As we are working on controlling our unhealthy appetite, there comes a new oily recipe, music and fantastic looking cake on our television.

Currently, I have been learning and practicing video and audio messages to promote my blog and book to spread more information on health around the world of teens and pre-teens. It requires listening to a few successful podcasts like EOFire by JLD, Smart Passive Income, and Gimlet. Many times, I hear the saying: “We are the sum of 5 people we meet. Do we start behaving the same way?” This may be the key to influence other while guarding ourselves. I am hoping I have changed a few of my friends or at least made an impact on their subconscious mind, so

they stop and evaluate before eating something unhealthy.

Start working on this journey, stand up if you miss a meal or eat wrong for a week, come back to it.

Chapter 5 - The Best Gift a Parent Could Give Their Children is Strong Health Habits

Parents raise their children with love and affection. I think the type of the food children eat and the understanding they develop regarding what is right and wrong in these foundational years is critical as they follow the same habits for the rest of their life. Parents are responsible for the food habits their children develop.

Birthday parties are a huge part of anyone's childhood. The cake, brownie, Jalebi, Gulab Jamun, pop, pizza, and chips brought together all your friends and helped create special memories. Some snacks, cake, are very traditional to celebrate this moment. How and when did this tradition start? I don't know but am sure it should not be mandatory. Could we have a party where we order fruits and vegetables or at least have it as a side, or at least as an option to influence kids that this is also a food category? I am sure kids will rain check and not attend the party if it only has vegetables. Even if

your community eats something other than food mentioned above, my questions remain the same.

Why do we get to eat chocolate, pastry, brownie or Jalebi (whatever sweet or dessert your community/country may have) for our achievements? My father will reward me with a brownie now and then to motivate me - but why? Why didn't he think of cutting a watermelon instead? I don't think I would have liked it, but that's not the point. Why couldn't I like it? Let us find answers and share it on the My Nutrition Meter Facebook Group or send me your notes and success stories so I can share them on my website.

Many parents give in to the demands and tantrums of their young children and provide them with the pastries and candies. Although this stops their annoyingness, it is leading them towards unhealthy habits they will spend months trying to change in the future or lead them to bad health as early as 35. Why did I pick the age 35? During my blog research on diabetes and heart disease, I found that many Indian people (I know this group the most) start getting these diseases by this age. I am not an expert but based on my research and Dr. Joel Fuhrman, author of *Eat to Live*, the primary cause of these diseases is

the type of food we eat. The process of accumulation of plaque and deterioration of health starts early. So, think a little before handing over the next candy, pack of chips, pretzels, laddoo, halwa, pastry, cake, brownie or Coke, Pepsi type of soda to your kid.

The plaque in the veins of their heart starts building up even as a child, and by the time he or she is 35, it starts being visible. We do not suddenly accumulate so much plaque. Can we join forces and create an awareness program that educates how feeding such food is reducing the life of their beloved kids? Don't fool yourself if you are skinny; you may still be accumulating this.

Please watch the following video from Dr. Sanjay Gupta of CNN telling us, with the help of experts, how we can be heart attack proof or at least avoid it. Bill Clinton's success story was also a surprise to me.

For more information click:
<https://youtu.be/Tnj0nmtwVbI>

I don't think parents' love and affection should be measured by how much they feed their children or how several types of snacks and sweets they make.

I am surprised after watching Dr. Ornish's Ted Talk states **that in this generation children lead a shorter life span than their parents.**

https://www.ted.com/talks/dean_ornish_on_the_world_s_killer_diet#t-111338

I don't think any parent would want their child to live a shorter life than them, but they still feed their children with junk. Why? I am trying to seek answers. Please share your views with me and educate the world.

Before my parents became aware of the importance of health, they used to be clueless and fed junk food to my friends and I - especially on my birthday. The emotions on a kid's birthday forces parents to bring the biggest cake, unlimited pizza and juice. I am sure you will also not suspect that store bought juices are also extremely unhealthy. I realized this when I wrote my blog on Juices a couple of months ago:

"A single 12-ounce glass of O.J. contains an incredible 9 teaspoons of sugar, about the same as a 12 ounce can of Coke! This equates to 36 grams of carbs, about half of what you should consume in a

day. Let's do a little math. If a person were to drink just one glass of orange juice each day that would mean that he or she would be consuming an extra 3,285 teaspoons (close to 70 cups) of sugar in a year or about 53,000 extra calories."

If you don't believe me, watch this Ted talk: <https://youtu.be/wOP18P2S-Lw>. Look at how much of sugar we are eating, and parents are giving to their children to show love.

These fruit juices are as just as bad as any soda like Coke or Pepsi. I remember seeing a poster at my school in fifth grade stating that water is the best drink and that processed fruit juice is one of the worst. However, I still saw these juices in many lunch boxes.

Did you know that the orange juice you buy at grocery stores is a waste of money! 98% of the store bought orange juice in North America is pasteurized or flash pasteurized. Pasteurization is the process of heating a liquid to an extremely high temperature for a few seconds which destroys the nutrients that were in the juice, leaving you with sugary water.

According to expert and author of the book Squeezed, Alissa Hamilton - orange juice is stripped of oxygen and flavor. It is stored for up to a year in tanks and re-flavored before it is packaged and sold to consumers. If we were to taste the juice coming out of these tanks, it would taste like pure sugar water, not orange juice. I don't know about you, but I think that this practice sounds disgusting.

Juice companies hire fragrance and flavor companies, the same ones who may be supplying scent to your favorite perfume brand, to ensure that flavor and the fruit smell is added back to the juice to create a fresh taste. Flavor packs aren't listed as an ingredient on the label because, technically and legally, they are derived from orange essence and oil. How shocking!

Please go to your refrigerators today and check the amount of sugar waiting for you to consume just inside your juice boxes. It's best to remove these from refrigerators completely.

Have you ever thought why parents continue to feed unhealthy food to their children and fail to teach them healthy eating habits? I believe that it is due to lack of awareness and laziness. The lack of

knowledge is not only about nutrition but also on how the consequences they are currently facing is because of what they ate earlier on in the life.

As a teen, we can also influence our parents. My experience of controlling my parents eating habits was required when we moved to the U.S. My family went through this busy phase of new jobs, new school, and new city; it forced us live on restaurant food daily for almost six months. It was only when I put my foot down and claimed I wouldn't eat the next meal if it were from a restaurant that my parents found ways to balance my diet. Soon, we re-added salads, raw vegetables, lentils and home cooked meals into our diet. I pushed them to eat healthy again even if it meant sacrificing taste. Soon, flavor once again seemed like a less important concept.

Every parent wishes a good, long healthy life for their kids. However, by not maintaining a healthy diet throughout their childhood and not creating strong nutritional habits, they are decreasing the chances of this wish coming true. Instead, they are setting their kids up for an adulthood filled with medications and diseases. Always remember what

we eat as children and teenagers are going to influence our future health.

In my opinion, parents are a lot more influential on their child's health than the media that surrounds them. Parents can control the kitchen in their home by freeing it of junk and filling it up with the foods their kids need.

An acquaintance of ours in Calgary, Canada said this to my dad, "***The best thing you can give to your children is your health.***" I have adapted this quote to "***The best gift a parent could give their children is strong health habits.***" Disciplining them, especially in matters of health, will allow their life to be long and energy-filled. This foundation will help us celebrate more Father's Days, Mother's Days and birthdays in the future.

Out of so many parents I met, I admired Mrs. Mona Singh, the mother of my friend Sukhmani, the most. She goes beyond the Canadian Food by balancing fun, taste, and nutrition brilliantly. I am sure this combination will keep my friend and her entire family into the right direction.

Based on interviews and discussions with Mona, I have understood how and why my family calls her the “Self-taught Nutritionist.” She agrees that parents are immensely responsible for what their kids put into their bodies. I am amazed at how she successfully fended off peer pressures from both her children, Dilraj and Sukhmani, and provided not only the delicious but nutritionally beneficial food but also the right quantity. Right portion is another common thread with her as I also agree that some parents over feed their kids and family. Why do we feel that way? A funny story she told to me is that her husband used to finish off half of their dinner while it is being cooked just in the pretext of tasting. Her strictness allowed her whole family to transform their bad habits to life changing rituals. Half way through our call, she shared an important and unique tip on how she fed her children vegetables without them knowing. She made a puree out of vegetables and added it to pasta sauce, pizza sauces and lentils. Through this, she won over her kid's tantrums. Her other ways to deal with all the complaining and crying was to “Always remind children about how and what they were eating would impact their health in the future.”

Her mantras of successful parenting have been:

- Portion size in the North American diet is ridiculous” Watch for it!
- One Gulab Jamun (Indian brownie) would taste same as the second one. So just eat one.”
- “If there is no junk food at home, no one will eat it.”
- “Always bring some raw cut up veggies/fruits and give it to kids before they ask for ice cream and candy when they go outside.”

Recently, I realized that I am very lucky to have parents that cannot cook. It helps add raw vegetables and fruits. I never realized how much my family had changed until my friend Vanessa commented after looking at my lunch of raw vegetables, chickpeas, and salad for many days “Do your parents know how to cook? Your lunch always seems to be salads, cut vegetables, etc.”. I take this as a compliment.

Chapter 6 - Where is the dressing?

This story took place recently at my school, and I cannot help but laugh each time I retell it. My journey to reduce the amount of dressing in my salad has reached the point that during lunch one day one of my friends Rachel looked at my salad and asked, “*Where is the dressing?*” All my other friends then also took a look and were shocked – and then burst out laughing. Initially, I was confused as to why they found my salad so funny. I responded, “It is right here.” To my surprise, they started laughing even more and told me that my dressing container is so empty that I was basically eating raw lettuce.

Although my diet had already drastically changed from a sugary cereal to a green smoothie for breakfast and a salad for lunch, I wanted to see what else I could for a little extra push. So, I started decreasing the amount of dressing I use for my salad.

This journey had many ups and downs. The quote below explains how I previously managed and continued to live healthily. I am not perfect; I am

just sharing the story of my journey as I get closer and closer to my goals. I eat a little junk food and unhealthy food almost daily but come back again on my resolve to be disciplined.

“The secret of life, though, is to fall seven times and to get up eight times.”

— [Paulo Coelho, The Alchemist](#)

Recently, I bought a meal from Vitality Bowl. It is a perfect place for the so-called healthy eater. I see a lot of high schoolers carrying food from Vitality Bowl as a fashion statement. The item I ordered is supposed to be a whole fruit bowl. I was surprised that the \$13 fruit bowl had a thick smoothie as a base with a few fruits put together on top with granola and honey. Was it delicious? Yes, absolutely. Was it healthy? Yes, only if you compare it to the ready-made juices and snacks available in stores. A fruit bowl at home would still be the best for health purposes. I will prefer the home version unless I am with my friends.

I remember the quotes listening through my parents. Although the quotes seemed worthless at the time, looking back, I have realized that all of them entered

my subconscious mind and unknowingly made it easier for me to keep fighting and transform my life through the foods I ate. If you are currently unaware about your subconscious mind and how it works, wait a couple more chapters until I share how I understood it and how you can use it for your benefit.

Have you ever thought why we only challenge and excel on grades/marks? Why don't we excel in the most important thing that has the greatest influence on our lives? Let us compete not only on grades but also on our eating habits.

Chapter 7 - Our Society

There are many days where it is important to eat some unhealthy food to have fun and build closer relationships with friends, especially on Festivals like Diwali, Holi, Thanksgiving, Eid and Christmas, but at most there are only around 30 such days. This leaves over 330 days in a year to maintain and concentrate on a healthy diet.

But the most important question I have for you is: why does our society immediately go for unhealthy food to celebrate. Who started this trend? Is it media? These questions would take a whole other book to analyze. Since this happens in every society, religion, and country, I do not think anyone has ever considered replacing all these party foods with options like raw fruits and vegetables. It is almost as if this unhealthy food is a religious or cultural requirement.

The same concept can be applied to get-togethers and parties. I think we should ask our parents to

include some healthy options so that we don't drop the ball keep moving towards our target. After realizing and thinking about this, I started being extra careful about what I eat at parties and now I come home with fewer regrets.

This junk food also surrounds school cafeterias, carnivals, and fairs. It seems like every single year the foods just get unhealthier. When I think of my school cafeteria, 99.9% is junk. Why don't we have some healthy options? Is it because it's expensive or perishable? I don't have all the answers, and I need your help to figure out. You can contribute to my blog with your views. Let us join forces to influence our schools, fairs to keep some healthy options to give our teens a chance.

According to an article by the Cooking Channel titled *World's Craziest Carnival Foods*, the San Diego County Fair was selling one of the unhealthiest snacks I have ever heard of - fried Kool aid. Kool-Aid itself is already artificially flavored water with sugar, but - fried! Something I am not even able to comprehend.

Various studies show that there is a strong correlation between the cafeteria food and the

increase in obesity among children. Are we giving options to our kids or are we using them to increase revenue to fund our school during budgetary constraints?

(<http://www.nber.org/digest/sep05/w11177.html>).

The statement in this study is very demoralizing for people like me who are trying to make a difference, *“Schools that are under financial pressure are more likely to make junk food available to their students.”*

Throughout Obama’s time as the President, Michelle Obama worked hard on the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act. This act forced the federal government to give more money to schools to ensure that they can feed their student's more nutritious foods. It forces school cafeterias to have less fat and sodium and increase whole grains, fruits, vegetables. Although the former First Lady’s actions would hope to decrease the number of obese and diabetic Americans significantly, the idea received a lot of backlashes!

I believe the backlash was due to our gap in education on what food should be and how these unhealthy foods are ruining the foundation of our life. I encourage you all to think how we can change

the attitude of teens. It may only influence one person at a time, but we can grow the healthy numbers fast if we all join in to help change people. It is my appeal to all of you to join on this journey to help improve teen health.

The reason why many food stores are not willing to sell more nutritious foods may be the price and chances for this type of food being perishable. Managing the perishable goods and bearing the cost of expired goods may be a huge loss to a company's profit. Moreover, many Americans also usually buy fast food instead of raw vegetables and fruits as the difference in price are too much. The first time I went to a Farmers Market, I was shocked to see how high the fresh fruit and vegetable prices were. Six apples for ten dollars! Compare it with McDonald's burgers. Why buy six apples when you could buy seven inexpensive burgers at McDonald's and feed your entire family for the day. Even though some may know that the McDonald's burger is one of the unhealthiest foods, it's cheaper, readily accessible and fills a whole family.

Due to lack education, people don't understand that buying raw vegetable, fruits, nuts, lentils and healthy raw whole foods is more beneficial because it has

many long-term benefits, unlike fast foods. **Spending more money on healthier food could even save you from spending tons of money on medical bills in the future.**

A lot of the time, people are unaware that what they are eating is unhealthy. For example, many members of my family and friends all think that they are getting enough nutrients through the subzi's (Indian style cooked mixed vegetables) they eat around two times a day. Sadly, because most are drenched with oil and/or overcooked, one must understand that most of the nutrients start disappearing within 10 seconds of keeping vegetables on stove/pan. The more time it remains in the pan, the more nutrients go away. The result is terrible for health, even though the taste is fantastic.

Think about the poor Baingan (large round eggplant).



I have enjoyed this Indian recipe many times in the past, but today I saw how unhealthy it is.

It is an elaborate and lengthy process to make this dish. First, you take a round eggplant and put it on a stove. Then, you wait until the skin is black and starts peeling off. After ripping the skin of the eggplant, you add some onion, exotic spices and tomatoes. While looking at my parents crushing this eggplant and sautéing it for a long time, I was wondering if there is any nutrition left in this tasty recipe. Research proves that at more than 50% of their nutritional value is lost due to overcooking.

The poor eggplant lost most of its nutritional value while being cooked. I am not saying that you should leave this tasty recipe or many things like we eat in any culture, but you should add some raw

vegetables to your plate to make your meal healthier and more balanced.

I have to admit that I do enjoy these cooked vegetables. To feel less guilty while I eat these nutrient deficient meals, I add raw cucumber, steamed broccoli, and asparagus. Since these habits in Indian-origin families are hard to fix, many people in India are in danger of getting diabetes and heart disease. In other cultures and countries, food recipes may be different but problems are similar.

The cause of these diseases can be either DNA or food habits. Although we cannot change DNA, we can certainly change our diet. One cannot hide behind this alibi, as the following Ted talks suggest clearly that 10% of our health is dependent on our DNA, the rest (90%) is based on our choices.

Please watch this video for more information:
https://www.ted.com/talks/dan_buettner_how_to_live_to_be_100#t-20504

Teens should wake up and educate their parents to leave their age-old ways of cooking. Cook some unhealthy food once in a while (if you must), not three times a day for your whole life. I understand that it is hard to resist the flavor and craving of a lot

of these foods. I have been there and still surrender a few times. My parents also fed me a lot of oil filled and drenched meals out of love, until they realized that this “love” was doing nothing but torturing my body and hurting my future.

The feeling how far I came in my health journey is incredibly rewarding. After two years on this voyage, my maternal grandparents came to live with us from India for three years. I was so excited to eat some of my grandmother's homemade food after too long. What she presented me with was nothing I would have ever imagined. I stared blankly at an Indian meal called a paratha that was drenched with oil. When I picked it up, some oil dripped off. My grandmother represents the type of Indian who believes that the more the love, food will have the less vegetable stuffing and the more oil.

I did not want to insult my grandmother, so I ate it and went to my describe kind of paratha I received. After some discussions, my grandma agreed to slowly start changing the way she and my grandfather ate for the better. After this, I was still able to enjoy my grandma's home cooked meals, without feeling so unhealthy. She learned it so quickly that she started decreasing the oil in Indian

vegetables and lentils. However, the overcooking part is still hard. This is an example of how as a teen, we cannot only control our life but also control the lives of our parents and grandparents.

After three years, when my grandmother and grandfather went back to India, all of their friends were amazed at how much thinner, fitter, faster and healthier they were. My grandma always complained about her legs and feet – even after walking 100 meters was now going up and down the 1-2 floors and basement, multiple times in a day and would even go on daily long walks. How did it happen? If an older person can change and benefit so much, young people can do much better.

It took a few years of family support to build these habits of asking the right questions before I decide on what to eat. Sometimes I still slip and find myself eating a little pizza, chocolate, and brownie or drinking a sip of iced tea. My main nutritional belief is to be healthy and be balanced. Infrequently eating some junk food is alright and needed for the types of social interactions widespread in our society today.

My friends already struggle with finding restaurants with acceptable vegetarian options in them, so

adding ‘nothing but raw fruits and vegetables’ would make them totally against going to any place with me. Although I am a vegetarian who has never eaten meat in her life, I support flexitarians if they still reach a goal of receiving 50% of their daily calories from raw vegetables, nuts, lentils, and fruits. I have not achieved that goal, but I will reach it soon.

I was surprised to note that our life’s Capacity is 90 years and life expectancy is 70 years. Why is this? Please watch this Ted talk to gain more insight and think of ideas to change ourselves and society.

https://www.ted.com/talks/dan_buettner_how_to_live_to_be_100

Chapter 8 - Media

Everyone participates in media in some way, whether that is through using an app like Facebook or reading the news. We frequently discuss new trends during our breaks in school. Media is the quickest way to spread information and start trends.

Unfortunately, while many large companies could use media to share the importance of eating healthy or share recipes, they use it to make unhealthy foods even more attractive. All this is done to earn more profits.

The media continually sell us ideas like sugar-free, less fat, and fortified with vitamins which are just empty words to camouflage unnatural, nutrient-free/deficient and hollow foods. That is why the companies have to add so many artificial ingredients. Just read the nutritional labels. Educate yourself! It is the key. The facts are available with the press of a button.

This book is about asking questions, understanding experiences and applying concepts that are explained in the latter part of the book.

I watch the Travel Channel often, and I love it. I sincerely enjoy seeing all of the amazing places there are to visit in this world. However, I do not approve of the crazy unhealthy foods they always show on their food shows. Although they are fascinating and have very charming hosts, I do not like how every single food suggested full of meat and grease. I have initiated a petition to the CEO of Travel channel to consider adding some programs for healthy eating. I wrote, *“the vegetarians like myself love your channel but get disturbed by programs that ignore showing vegetarian food or healthier food. The majority of foods shown in this program are meat filled and so greasy that it negatively impacts the health of anyone who eats it.”* We all, including these media channels, have some social responsibility.

It hurts me to see so much obesity, diabetes, and health issues that are caused by unknowingly eating these foods. I understand the importance of showing what will attract the most customers to earn as much money possible, but I feel that it is our social

responsibility to educate people on the healthy options of food.

Similarly, in many of the cooking competition shows on Food Network, the chefs are rarely given fruits or vegetables as a necessary ingredient in their preparations. At most, a chef would fry some vegetables or turn a fruit into an ice cream or cake. There are many contests for cakes, pastries, cupcakes, meat, etc. Have you ever heard of a contest for healthier food (like a salad) or a competition that checks how nutritious food is as part of the scoring? I have not seen any such program. I have started to write to these channels in the hope that when the pressure/ market is there, they will oblige. I think it's all about making money. I believe we should have that also look at the nutritional aspect of the food. It may bring some innovation and make these foods more delicious and sought after by teens.

Unfortunately, TV shows are not the only reason why unhealthy foods are becoming increasingly popular. Strong companies like Pepsi and Coca-Cola, spend millions of dollars on some of their advertisements to intrigue customers and influence them to buy their juice and pop.

Many pop companies come up with a lower calorie drink and advertise it to make people believe that it is healthier, while it is hurting their bodies a lot more than the original would. For example, Diet Coke is filled with artificial sweeteners which fulfill the taste of sweetness in your mouth while tricking the rest of your body into thinking you are consuming fewer calories. According to an article by CNN Health named *Diet Soda May Do More Harm Than Good*, “*Diet soda drinkers also tend to pack on more pounds than those who don’t drink it.*” It is caused by the strange sweet taste increasing the consumer's appetite and sugar craving. The artificial sugar chemicals in these diet drinks cause the consumer to get somewhat addicted and keep coming back for more. Even if you are a frequent diet soda drinker who has maintained a healthy weight, you still have a significantly increased risk of getting the top three killers in the United States: diabetes and heart disease.

The fight against these companies cannot be done by one teen only. We need to form a team - a team in each school, community, and city. It is one more reason for this book being free. We can only fight with education.

I was able to say no to my dad when he wanted to buy a slice of pizza for me one evening. This education and my approach explained in later chapters helped me to say no to a slice of pizza. He sent me the picture from Costco and asked, do you want to eat pizza? I said yes. Then from the line/queue, he sent me a picture of the nutritional information, and I immediately said no when I saw that one slice is 760 Calories!

Many junk food companies are solely trying to increase revenue, and by fooling their customers. Through advertisements, they make their food look very desirable and immediately have people across the world craving it, without telling the potential risks and harms. They trick their customers into buying food that will negatively impact their future. Shouldn't we ask governments to mention on these junk food packets that *"eating this packet will increase your chances of heart disease or diabetes"*?

It is tough for a single person to stand up and appeal to these corporates, however, if many people join and make their voices heard, through a boycott or anything else, the decisions of these large corporations can be influenced or changed.

Chapter 9 - Why is fast food, processed food preferred? - Societal Impact

Even though some kids also have diabetes, obesity and many other diseases that are caused by unhealthy foods, many teens and children many get away with eating incredibly unhealthy for the early part of their life. However, at 35 or so, the results of the junk we have eaten will start showing up in the form of heart disease, diabetes, hair loss or damaged skin to name a few. As per Dr. Ornish' Ted Talk, one study tells that 65% of adults and 15% of children are overweight and diabetes has increased 70% in 30-year-olds in the past ten years.

It was not always easy to eat healthy. While I brought a salad or some raw vegetables to school, my friends brought pizza, pasta, and burgers. Every single day I was always craving these empty-calorie-loaded processed foods, but looking at the direct and immediate impact on skin, hair loss, and other health problems, I continued to eat the healthy options. And although it felt miserable then, I am happy now.

One funny situation happened every time we went on a day trip or picnic with a group of family friends in Calgary Canada. Every family would bring delicious food choices for a picnic, and if it were up to my dad, we would have picked a few cucumbers, carrots, watermelon. I believe and have said many times in the book that to live in the society we need to be open minded. I ate and continue to eat a limited amount of snack, junk food when required to be with friends.

To understand how we can combat so many influences, we need to find out why we even eat fast food.

Most people enjoy fast food because it is both convenient and cheap. However, they do not realize that packing raw vegetables and fruits into a container is also very convenient. I understand that many people who start this health transformation think that the taste of these plants is unbearable, but there are ways to maintain a healthy diet when you have less time on your hands.

There have been many days where my parents have been too busy to cook and not found a chance to make lunch or dinner so I would be left with raw

fruits and vegetables as my meals. A busy schedule is not an excuse for eating fast food, though, because everyone can find one hour in a week to go to their grocery store to buy some raw vegetables to eat for the upcoming week.

Another reason why fast food is preferred is how cheap it is. I am aware that some families do not have the privilege to spend lots of money on the food they eat, however many others that can, still do not. If you are in a family that can afford to spend up to \$50 more on their food in a month, then it is important to spend that extra money instead of saving it for possible future expensive medical bills including medicine and surgeries.

We have had many discussions during our dinners in a restaurant that many people can spend more than \$100 for one meal and they still think many times before buying vegetable and fruits because it is expensive. I don't have answers for this behavior. But I would like you to ask yourself this question before you head out to a restaurant a couple of times a week with your family. Would it be possible to ask your parents/families to skip one restaurant meal of \$50-100 to substitute for two weeks of vegetables and fruits? Just simple math!

Another thing I found is that many people are too lazy to cut the vegetables and they see it as a chore. *I guess this is the cost we pay to be energetic to do chores when we grow up.* Another quote from my dad is always: “*The sweat you put in at the peace time will save you blood in war!*” This quote is one of the universal ones that I have listened to hundreds of times and it explains our situations as teens. The better we do now, the better the foundation for sound health in the future.

Chapter 10- Fashion, Makeup and Style Conscious Teens

Many teenagers these days, including me, are becoming increasingly obsessed with their looks. Through makeup and fashion, girls try to improve their appearance.

It has become a trend. I also wear makeup sometimes even after understanding the impact on my skin. I even heard that there is an effect on self-confidence in the long run, so I leave that decision and research to readers as I am not aware of the psychology behind it. Do share your insight on my blog if you find something unique.

I do not think that many teen girls are aware of the wonders of eating a healthy green smoothie. They would lose not only weight, but also have clearer and glowing skin, or I should say radiant skin. I want to issue a challenge for all teen girls to start drinking green smoothies daily (made of pure spinach/kale 50%, with fruit 50%, and water - no sugary juice) for three months and check the

difference. I am 100% sure you will be glowing and need less makeup, and you'll be more energetic. Please share your success story on my blog.

Apart from this, females and males that suffer from hair loss would also reap benefits. I use green smoothies, and they have significant effects, but sadly it has no impact on father's receding hairline.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/blenditandMendit>

Glowing skin is one benefit. The healthy smoothies will provide you a bonanza of other things. Don't forget to add salads and lentils and nuts as they provide you the complete nutrition.

In my opinion, most of us are just being ignorant of the benefits that could come from removing the unhealthy comfort food from our diet. Instead, the focus is going towards the easy way out which is painting over the acne on your face and putting fake hair onto your scalp. The reason many of us are don't act on removing unhealthy foods perfectly summarized by an English poet named Thomas Gray when he says "*ignorance is bliss*," which essentially means that if you do not know something, you do not need to worry about it.

If teens start putting the passion and energy into changing the foods like smoothies, salads, lentils, whole grains, our generation could be one of the healthiest generations yet to exist on this earth!

We can also understand how little importance we give to our health that we take care of our car more than our own body.

The last time my dad refueled our car with gas, I realized that our bodies are very similar to cars. Both need to be refueled. And if the gas is not excellent quality an issue will come up in the car, and it will need to go for maintenance, similar to if the body is consuming too much-processed foods it will need to go to the doctor. Through this analogy, it is evident that just like a car, our bodies need to be refueled with proper food to stop it from malfunctioning. A car needs to go for regular preventive maintenance just like we do annual check-ups. Are we taking care of our health similar to what we do for our cars? Are we making an effort to understand whether our bodies have a right foundation and will last longer?

Chapter 11 - Balanced Life/Open Minded Approach

People in our society these days are either in love with the idea of veganism and continually insult meat eaters or are meat eaters that offend vegans for never experiencing the beautiful taste of bacon, fish, chicken and steak. They are both closed-minded and do not even bother thinking of living a balanced life, with an appropriate amount of meat and vegetables. Even though I have never eaten meat in my life, I am friends with both types of people. Over time, I have become open-minded which has resulted in understanding both sides of the story.

When I moved to my new school in California, my first vegan friend often told me a disturbing fact. *“Cows are raped to be mothers to produce milk and calves, without leaving a few days of rest in between. The babies born are immediately then taken to kill to make soft meat as being a baby meat it supposedly sells for more”*. The same must be happening to *lambs, goats and other animals*. I also

watched a disturbing Netflix documentary on it to learn some more. On her advice, I watched some PETA videos of a newborn calf immediately getting killed for meat. Vegans believe that even people who drink milk are encouraging the animal farming and situation mentioned above and they should also consider themselves responsible for the plight of animals. They think that when the cow's milk producing ability is finished, it goes for the same fate - someone's food.

My understanding after watching lots of shows on TV, researching and discussing at home, is that it is impossible for me to change the mindset of meat eaters, therefore I am focusing on moving teens away from processed food

Additional argument against animal farming is made by a UN study. Animal agriculture is responsible for 18% of greenhouse gas emissions, more than the combined exhaust from all transportation. It is said to be contributing more than all the cars in the world.

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?newsID=20772#.WWJm94TyuM8>

Just like my first vegan friend, I have many friends who are meat enthusiasts and often joke about calling themselves carnivores as they rarely eat any vegetables or fruits at all. They often laugh at the fact that I am vegetarian and they do not forget to remind me how much I am missing out on. When I ask them to give me one more reason, other than taste, on why I should start eating meat, they say health - specifically protein. Some also wondered how I am going to survive in a real world without meat.

They usually ask:

"If you don't eat meat, chicken, or fish, where do you get your protein?"

I understand and agree that many types of fish and other forms of meat are excellent sources of protein, but your body needs more than just that. To function it needs Vitamins and hundreds of nutrients and so much more. Unfortunately, nearly none of these vitamins and minerals are in any kind of meat.

I am open-minded to the fact that eating meat, drinking milk or being vegan is a choice a person makes in life. My recommendation is to consider adding raw vegetables and fruits to meat diets to

slowly reach to a level where around 50% of your calories come from vegetables, fruits, lentils, etc. and avoid junk and processed food.

Eating raw vegetables and fruits is just one thing. During a typical week of mine, I find myself tempted to eat brownies and chips. Since I do not eat these junk foods often and balance them with many vegetables and fruits at home, it is manageable. Obviously, it would be best to avoid all of these foods entirely, but that is practically impossible for a teen in our society. I remember my best friend Alison in fourth grade's story. Even as a kid and pre-teen she was so health conscious. Every time she ate chocolate, she would rush to the refrigerator and grab a few pieces of broccoli. This habit of eating raw broccoli every time she went for a processed food or chocolate is serving her well as a water polo athlete.

A newly published article in [*JAMA Internal Medicine*](#) has investigated the relationship between (animal vs. plant) protein sources and mortality risk from almost 30 years of follow-up from the Nurses' Health Study and Health Professionals Follow-up Study, which together included over 170,000 participants.

Interesting findings came out of one particular question the researchers asked: **What would happen if the participants replaced some of their animal protein with plant protein?** They analyzed the data to estimate how participants' risk of death from all causes during the follow-up period would change if some of the animal protein sources (equivalent to 3 percent of total daily calories) were replaced with plant protein sources:

- Replace processed red meat: **34 percent** decrease in risk
- Replace unprocessed red meat: **12 percent** decrease in risk
- Replace poultry: **6 percent** decrease in risk
- Replace fish: **6 percent** decrease in risk
- Replace [eggs](#): **19 percent** decrease in risk
- Replace dairy: **8 percent** decrease in risk^{[1](#)}

**PROTEIN CONTENT OF COMMON FOODS
IN INCREASING ORDER OF PROTEIN PER CALORIE**

	PROTEIN (GRAMS)	CALORIES	PROTEIN PER CALORIE	PERCENT PROTEIN
One banana	1.2	105	0.01	5
One cup of cooked brown rice	4.8	220	0.02	9
One corn on the cob	4.2	150	0.03	11
One baked potato	3.9	120	0.03	13
One cup of regular pasta	7.3	216	0.03	14
One 6-oz. fruit yogurt	7.0	190	0.04	15
Two slices of whole-wheat bread	4.8	120	0.04	16
One Burger King cheeseburger	18.0	350	0.05	21
Meatloaf with gravy (Campbell's)	14.0	230	0.06	24
One cup of frozen peas	9.0	120	0.08	30
One cup of lentils (cooked)	16.0	175	0.09	36
One cup of tofu	18.0	165	0.11	44
One cup of frozen broccoli	5.8	52	0.11	45
One cup of cooked spinach	5.4	42	0.13	51

Note that green vegetables have the most protein per calorie of all the above.

Chapter 12 - Passengers are responsible for their belongings

Let me give you a little background of Indian parents, they always try to make Mark Zuckerberg or Sheryl Sandberg out of every kid, not understanding that everyone can't be like him or her. I digressed to provide you a little context.

Throughout my life, no matter how much I study, my parents, like most Indian origin parents, always demanded more. I have never been a very studious kid so my dad would try to play mind games with me to get me to study a little bit more. I vividly remember what he said one time when he looked at my tired face and wanted to squeeze the last drop of productivity out of my waking time. He brought forward a so-called excellent idea that he would hold the book and flip the pages and I **“just had to answer”** the question. So simple right! After a couple of minutes, my ten-year-old mind got the trick, and I told him to reverse the roles. He stepped back and walked away stating his favorite quote'

“Passengers are responsible for their belongings”
that I had already listened million times.

My father grew up in India (Haryana State) and frequently used the public bus. He never forgets to remind me how lucky and pampered I am, as I do not need to stand outside in the sweltering heat of 45 degrees Celsius (113 Fahrenheit) and sit for hours on an overloaded bus most, drive with 1.5 times the capacity leaving little space to sit and relax) In all his long commutes of 2-4 hours in 45-degree Celsius, heat waves coming on to his face and intense vibrations on the bus on the road with some potholes, the best he could do was to stare inside. On these buses, there is a message written all over, *“Passengers are responsible for their belongings,”* and for some reason, this stuck with him. As his education continued, he realized that this saying could be used philosophically for many different things, including health. He used it million times with me to remind that I will suffer the consequences if I study any less than his expectations on the weekend.

The passengers are all of us, and our belongings are our bodies. No surgery or makeup can cover the damage of how irresponsible you have been with

your body. Whether someone's terrible health is from false advertising, media or health-ignorant parents, their body is the one that is going to suffer. If we are diabetic, obese or have any other sick health-caused disease/disorder, the people around us will just feel sympathy, but will not be able to do anything else. So, it is important to that we stand up for ourselves and take care of our health and be strong enough to avoid the food we are tempted to eat almost daily because of our media.

My family has slipped many times and almost gone back to how unhealthy we used to be, but we help each other stand back up and continue our path to greatness. One of these times was the first six months in California. My parents were so insanely busy with their new jobs and settling down that they had no time for grocery shopping or cooking. It resulted in them buying takeout and bringing it home. For the first six couple months in this new country, I understood the need for this but also how important it was for us to go back to our healthy lifestyle eventually.

After six months, I stepped on the scale to see that I had gained a few pounds and I noticed I was losing hair. It is when I knew that we were settled down

enough for my parents and me to take out some time in their day at least to go grocery shopping. When I first told my parents this, they said, “*What, we don’t have time for that!*” I knew this was just an excuse to keep eating the food we were more than pleased.

After a couple of weeks of reminding them about the importance of nutrition and all the stuff they once told me, they finally understood. And now, five months after on our health path, we are pleased to be back at the place we once were in Canada, health-wise.

Chapter 13 - Triangle of Life

A while ago during all the pressures of GPA, good university and career, I was thinking about the things I want most in my life. I came up with a list of three things that would make my life perfect: health, knowledge, and wealth. I think it is important to work hard and get as close to perfect as possible in all three.

My dad used to be part of a club called the Running Room where he, and a bunch of other people who were passionate about running, would come together and run as a group. He always came home amazed at the grandmas, and grandpas even in their late sixties and seventies that came to run many kilometers with him and many younger people. However, some Indian grandparents I met, including mine, are now going through some issues with their body, like arthritis, diabetes and having troubles walking. Why is there is such a difference? I realized, after observation and discussions with my parents, that if it were not for the unhealthy food the grandparents ate as children and adults, carelessness, and

unawareness of the impacts of unhealthy food, they would have been just as athletic as some of the Canadian seniors at my dad's running club. Some people can hide behind their genes, so let them be. I cannot convince everyone. I am looking for like-minded individuals who can get motivated with these examples and open their eyes and agree to explore better options and improve their future.

We will grow up to be adults, parents, and grandparents. **Do you want to be a runner at 75 or have diabetes at 35?** The choice is simple. Looking at the reports and observations of many wealthy Indian (Indian because they are the ones I met the most) families, it seems most are forgetting the most important aspect which is health.

For one of my blog posts, I decided to write about heart attacks and what causes them. Through research, I found that there are many diabetic and heart patients in India. I understand that there are many other countries with a similar amount or more heart patients, but I am commenting on India because that is the culture I am most familiar with.

Chapter 14 - My Mantra of Healthy Eating

Understand the concept of nutrient density with our family guru for nutrition, Dr. Fuhrman, who states “What makes my dietary advice unique is that it is focused on quality, not quantity. The following quotes are from this book Eat to Live. It concentrates on the type of foods you eat. Its most important nutritional concept is:

$$H=N/C$$

$$\text{Health} = \text{Nutrients} / \text{Calories}$$

“For excellent health and life expectancy, concentrate on consuming foods that contain a lot of micronutrients and fewer calories. Micronutrients are vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals; they do not contain calories, but they have vital functions in the body. Calories come from fat, protein, and carbohydrates. You want to take in the foods that contain the most micronutrients per calorie. You want to get the most nutrient bang for each caloric

buck. When you eat this way, calorie-counting no longer matters.

High micro nutrient foods come straight from nature; whole plant foods, such as vegetables, fruit, seeds, nuts, and beans, should be the basis of a healthy, anti-cancer diet. Without adequate micronutrients, food cravings, discomfort, and the demand to over-consume calories can be overwhelming and derail any effort to lose weight or eat healthfully.”

Eat raw vegetables is “eat as much as you want.” The following is a list I follow. I have tried almost all of them and eat most (based on availability) regularly. I promised that this book is not about recipes and food groups, but these couple of charts and pages provide extensive information about my approach and will help you and I apply the concepts to reach our goals of eating nutrient dense foods. All kinds of meats, chips, processed foods, white bread, pasta &, pizza have no or very little nutritional value.

Dr. Fuhrman's Aggregate Nutrient Density Index (ANDI)

Sample Nutrient/Calorie Density Scores

Kale	1000
Collard Greens	1000
Mustard Greens	1000
Watercress	1000
Swiss Chard	895
Bok Choy	865
Spinach	707
Arugula	604
Romaine	510
Brussels Sprouts	490
Carrots	458
Cabbage	434
Broccoli	340
Cauliflower	315

Bell Peppers	265
Asparagus	205
Mushrooms	238
Tomato	186
Strawberries	182
Sweet Potato	181
Zucchini	164
Artichoke	145
Blueberries	132
Iceberg Lettuce	127
Grapes	119
Pomegranates	119
Cantaloupe	118
Onions	109
Flax Seeds	103
Orange	98
Edamame	98

Cucumber	87
Tofu	82
Sesame Seeds	74
Lentils	72
Peaches	65
Sunflower Seeds	64
Kidney Beans	64
Green Peas	63
Cherries	55
Pineapple	54
Apple	53
Mango	53
Peanut Butter	51
Corn	45
Pistachio Nuts	37
Oatmeal	36

Shrimp	36
Salmon	34
Eggs	31
Milk, 1%	31
Walnuts	30
Bananas	30
Whole Wheat Bread	30
Almonds	28
Avocado	28
Brown Rice	28
White Potato	28
Low Fat Plain Yogurt	28
Cashews	27
Chicken Breast	24
Ground Beef, 85% lean	21
Feta Cheese	20

French Fries	12
White Pasta	11
Cheddar Cheese	11
Apple Juice	11
Olive Oil	10
White Bread	9
Vanilla Ice Cream	9
Corn Chips	7
Cola	1

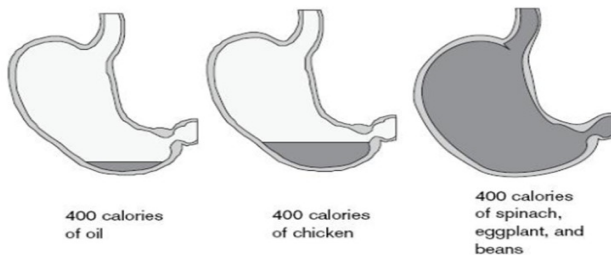
Nutrient Scoring Method

“To determine the ANDI scores, an equal-calorie serving of each food was evaluated. The following nutrients were included in the evaluation: fiber, calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, zinc, copper, manganese, selenium, vitamin A, beta carotene, alpha carotene, lycopene, lutein and zeaxanthin, vitamin E, vitamin C, thiamin,

riboflavin, niacin, pantothenic acid, vitamin B6, folate, vitamin B12, choline, vitamin K, phytosterols, glucosinolates, angiogenesis inhibitors, organosulfides, aromatase inhibitors, resistant starch, resveratrol plus ORAC score. ORAC (Oxygen Radical Absorbance Capacity) is a measure of the antioxidant or radical scavenging capacity of food. For consistency, nutrient quantities were converted from their typical measurement conventions (mg, mcg, IU) to a percentage of their Dietary Reference Intake (DRI). For nutrients that have no DRI, goals were established based on available research and current understanding of the benefits of these factors. To make it easier to compare foods, the raw point totals were converted (multiplied by the same number) so that the highest ranking foods (leafy green vegetables) received a score of 1000, and the other foods received lower scores accordingly.”

The following picture from his book Eat to Live is a reminder what happens when we eat nutrient dense foods vs. processed foods/meats and oil.

MORE BULK MEANS FEWER CALORIES



When subjects eating foods low in caloric density, such as fruits and vegetables, are compared with those consuming foods richer in calories, those on meal plans with higher calorie concentrations were found to consume twice as many calories per day in order to satisfy their hunger.¹

Chapter 15 - Recalibrating our Tastes

The first time a person with a history of eating unhealthy tastes a small, raw piece of kale, I can guarantee you that they will spit it out. It happens because your taste buds are not used to the peculiar taste of vegetables, let alone one of the grossest and healthiest ones - kale. However, after a week of strictly eating these vegetables, your taste buds will recalibrate, and you will get used to the taste and very soon start enjoying it.

There are many kinds of detox. I watched a documentary on Netflix where a person did amazing things with just fresh pressed juices and smoothies for 60 days to restart his health journey. Another one I read recently about is sugar detox. It will be very hard as I love chocolates, but maybe I can try. We can build an online group.

"Sugar makes you fat, ugly and old," said Brooke Alpert, a registered dietitian and co-author of "The Sugar Detox: Lose the Sugar, Lose the Weight --

Look and Feel Great." "What we've discovered in the last couple of years is that sugar is keeping us overweight. It's also a leading cause of heart disease, it negatively affects the skin, and it leads to premature aging."

The author of this book assures that on this sugar detox plan, you can add an apple on the fourth day. *"By the fourth day, an apple tastes like candy," Alpert said. "The onions are sweet! Almonds are sweet! Once you take sugar away from your diet cold turkey, your palate and you start tasting natural sugars again."*

I have to improve a lot, and I found that my Dad also steals chocolates at home. I have found a few candy wrappers in his car almost daily and wondered how he gets those. We figured out that he gets a few pieces of candy every day from his office receptionist since he can't eat it openly at home. Let's change the habits now at teen and pre-teen level, so we don't end up as an adult like him. Even though he is very healthy and tries hard to control his temptations, but he has been unsuccessful to reduce his weight for the last many months. Maybe this sugar detox or juice detox will work for him as well. He is a determined person once he decides

something - he will make it. Hopefully, this book will change him as well. It will be a gift to me.

“Children can benefit, too.” Lustig's research revealed that “when obese children eliminated added sugars from their diets for just nine days, every aspect of their metabolic health improved -- despite no changes in body weight or total calories consumed.”

I am sharing a true success story from Vince Chan. Vince is a family friend who has done various detox diets in the last few years and is in a great shape. The following is the story in his own words.

“Ever since I was a teenager, I can remember myself struggling with two skin issues. One was acne, and the other was eczema.

There are some possibilities behind this. Most teenagers go through significant hormonal changes, and some of that can impact acne. Eczema is very different. There are varying levels of eczema which can be as simple as dry skin to flaky and painful raw looking skin which is irritated by water, grass or almost any allergen.

While Acne was just a superficial embarrassment, I still had to manage it and deal with the odd embarrassment from it up to my mid-30s. Unlike most females (and some males), I did not use makeup to mask my acne.

My eczema was very extreme. There were years it became so painful that my skin would crust and I would almost be in tears from the pain. The only way to alleviate the pain was to go to the doctor to get cortisone. My sister also had the same issue. However, she still struggles with it today.

Coincidentally (or maybe not coincidentally) both issues ceased around 35. I looked back to see what significant change I made. The only real difference I made was my diet. Prior to 35, I ate lots of carbs and minimal fats. This is the diet we were led to believe was healthy in our generation. I had always been an athlete and performed several hours of exercise every week leading up to 35.

At 35, I suffered a major leg injury and could not perform weight bearing exercises for four months. I immediately put on weight and knew there had to be a better way. One of the biggest changes I made was to start eating a high-fat low carb diet. The weight

melted off. In my case, the skin began to clear, and the acne rarely comes back. Carbs and sugar are a direct cause of inflammation. Once I remove the inflammation caused by simple carbs and sugar, so did the skin irritations.

However, when I have my cheat days (usually once every few weeks), the acne immediately returns and with a vengeance. In fact, I often ended up with giant pimples the next morning. I should point out my cheat days always consist of extremely high sugar and carbs, e.g.,) donuts, apple turnovers ice cream, wine gums, fries, pizza, naan bread.

I have since implemented a further technique. I perform regular fasts in the length of 16 – 144 hours. This clears the inflammation caused by these foods as well as eliminates all other toxins in the body. The result is clear skin in usually a few days as well as many other benefits. I should mention that I do not recommend fasting for people who are still growing as there are not enough studies done to prove whether it has adverse effects on growth.

Now in my 40s, I can still replicate this pattern with high predictability. I only have bouts of acne when I decide to eat like a teenager, while my sister still

suffers from acne and eczema almost 365 days of the year. I should also mention that not everyone responds the same way to these types of foods. My body is extremely sensitive to sugar and carbs so the results can be seen immediately while some people are almost immune to sugar and carbs.”

I will start trying one of these detox diets one or twice a month. I heard from my mother that she does some religious fasts, which can also be a detox diet option. However, observing carefully how much food a fasting person is accumulating in the allowable period of the day was funny to me. My mother keeps some religious fasts, and I see that her lunch bag is similar in size of other days; maybe just the type of food is different. The funniest situation I encountered was when I Googled “Indian Fasting recipes,” and I received numerous options on recipes. Are you kidding? 70+ recipes for a religious fast! I am further confused when I see pictures of these yummy recipes

I digress again, but my point is that detox is possible when we control our mind. I am trying to convince my mother to go on a fast/detox. Let's see if she can become my role model like Vince.

I think it's a fight between mind and body and Intellect. I will explain this concept soon in the coming chapter.

Chapter 16 - Compound Effect

Many teenagers and adults in our modern society want to see immediate results and are too lazy to work hard for them. Many people sit like couch potatoes eating popcorn in front of their television and watch ads on how a product can give them skinny thighs in a month. Usually, these products just leave people with less money in their pockets. It is important for everyone, including me, to learn that we have to work hard for the results we want and that we cannot get them by just pressing a button, like many other things in society these days. I remember one of my close friends telling me that my idea of a healthy life seemed too difficult. So now, I want to share the importance of the compound effect.



The beauty of the Compound Effect is in its simplicity. Notice how, on the left side of the diagram, the results are intangible, but how powerfully they differ later on. The behaviors all along the way are exactly the same, but the magic of the Compound Effect eventually kicks in to bring massive differences in results.

This graph above taken from Darren Hardy's book showed me that it could take up to 27 months of wise choices, good behavior, and a healthy habit to yield the results we all dream of. Although 27 months is a long time, the effect will eventually kick in in a few initial months, and it will bring massive results as the compounding effect works every additional month. I hope you understand compounding math in school and, if not, just ask an adult.

These wise choices can be as simple as observing and being conscious of what we are eating and understanding the impact it will have in the future.

While reading this portion of the book, I realized that my family went through a long period of struggles before we could successfully integrate a vegetable smoothie into our daily lives. It all started around five years ago listening to the Toastmaster speech, where my father thought that it was a very good idea to make our family healthier. Vitamix, as mentioned earlier, brought revolution in our lives. We have been drinking vegetable and fruit smoothies almost daily and have grown to love them more and more. It took us more than two years of complaining, stopping, restarting and my tears

before we started enjoying this part of our lives that filled each day with a little more energy.

Just as an extended period of consistent good habits can improve the quality of your life, your grades, your chances of getting a good career or a school of your choice, a long period of consistent bad habits can ruin your choices too. The same formula works for health too, even though the resulting benefit or loss is visible after a couple of decades or so. That is why I think we don't think twice before enjoying the juice, chips, brownie, cake, greasy type of food, just to name a few. If you make a choice that may seem like it will not have a significant negative impact at the moment, it will still add up every meal, each decision and negatively impact you exponentially after a few years.

It somehow works as a bank balance. The better food we eat, the more positive the balance. Similarly, the wrong kind of food takes away this bank balance and turns into a negative. The bankruptcy can be a heart attack or diabetes. You can visualize with ease what I am trying to say. I believe that one time I eat junk food, for example, I realized that my decision to pick up my afternoon snack (a spinach wrap from Starbucks on my way to

tutoring from school) similar to a fast food place even though it says spinach. I was feeling good from a taste and convenience point of view, but I had a feeling that I may be overstepping on my resolve to eat healthier food and improve. I initially felt like there was little to no impact on your weight and health. However, as time goes on and months pass, you will begin to see quick increases in your weight, a decrease of energy, and you have more health issues. It could have happened, but I started to add a salad and raw vegetables only for dinner. My point is, since I have already eaten a crab and sort of junk food, I should compensate and fight it with better nutrition. As per the Last Heart Attack by Sanjay Gupta of CNN, plaque adds up in your arteries over time, and it does not just quickly appear when you are an adult. It is important to throw out bad habits, no matter how small they may be, because these minor actions will add up to one huge negative impact. Watch the Sanjay Gupta the Last Heart Attack documentary again.

To change, it is important first to be aware of your actions and acknowledge that there are certain things you need to improve. You need to own all your actions before you can even begin to think of changing them. Although I had gotten a lot of help

from my parents to improve my habits for healthy eating, I needed to understand that the fruits and vegetables I was eating were for my health and benefit. We cannot blame our surroundings (parents, TV, school cafeteria). I believe that **we are the hero and victim** of our own decisions.

I like Darren Hardy's statement:

***Small, Smart Choices + Consistency + Time
= RADICAL DIFFERENCE***

All of the small changes we make in life that seem insignificant will add up to create a radical difference in an extended period. In health, these minor changes could be drinking one green smoothie every morning or replacing your white spaghetti/noodles/pasta with vegetable/quinoa/edamame spaghetti or, better yet, use Spiralizer to get Zucchini pasta or noodles. I have successfully replaced white and processed pasta by around 60%. My goal is to be 100%. Success is the result of small, smart choices and consistently over time. Many people get frustrated

when they do not see a change after a short period. However, it is important to keep working consistently and efficiently before we can begin to see a payoff. After you get used to these diet changes, you can start to take more baby steps to improve your quality of life even more.

The following has been in my head a million times when I needed to recover from an awful school test result or a bad choice of food.

“The secret of life, though, is to fall seven times and to get up eight times.”

— [Paulo Coelho, The Alchemist](#)

If this is not enough, watch the speeches that I listened to an uncountable number of times. It was forced listening initially, but I started liking this stuff as I was fighting back on my GPA/school percentages as well as healthy eating habits.

Darren Lacroix- <https://youtu.be/FUDCzbmLV-0>

Chapter 17 – Rebellious



A blogger [Julia Gottwald](#) said “You can’t really “run off” a burger – recent studies show a lack of exercise is not to blame for rising obesity rates, bad diets are the real driver...You’ll get taller”, “it’s good for your health”, “you need your 5 a day.” Things that everyone has heard again and again during their teenage years,

and for most of their life. And apparently, they're not even that useful either. [American researchers](#) have demonstrated that the only way to convince a teenager to eat healthily is to make them think eating fruits and veggies is rebellious.

If the normal way of seeing healthy eating is that it is lame, then you don't want to be the kind of person who is a healthy eater. But if we make healthy eating seem like the rebellious thing that you do, you make your own choices, you fight back against injustice, then it could be high status." said David Yeager, co-author of the research from the University of Texas at Austin."

Teens of this age start rebelling against everything. Can we focus on the right objective that can help us live longer and healthier?

Rebel against all corporations and media! Somehow, we need to make it popular to eat healthier food. I have started a petition against Travel channel and will start many more. Let's connect and start groups to influence teens and pre-teens in schools

We need to become a sponge to listen to great ideas and implement them rather than blindly following the community/religion/ country we belong and type

of food our parents/grandparents thought were the best. Rebel against these customs that make you eat cake, pizza, pop, chips, Jalebi or sweets on a birthday. Start by asking to add vegetables.

Chapter 18 - Act First, Think Later or is “Act decisively after evaluation.”

I have written this book in an easy to read style. My family's philosophy is - “Act first think later - with a twist”. I hate this saying but it works. I improvised it to say “*Act decisively after evaluation.*” It essentially means acting decisively rather than getting seized by “Analysis Paralysis” type of syndrome. Following this quote can stop us from going into the endless analysis paralysis circle, which will never allow us to move forward with our lives. I understand that this could have resulted in us wasting a lot of food and money, but it did help us in taking risks to improve our knowledge and health, and that is worth a lot. We continue to evolve and waste less now.

There may be a few right or wrong interpretations of this phrase. It may be that someone may think that it leads to careless picking of foods without analyzing risk. I am not asking for you to jump from a building or rock without thinking, or drink and drive, or pick up a sugary drink/pastry without thinking. All I ask you is to take a step towards the goal of healthy

living. Once on the path, we can fine-tune our efforts with different detox or diet methods to suits our goals based on the new information. Don't get stuck by the fact that there are so many conflicting views on diets and you don't know which one is best. I also don't know except that 50% or more calories per day should be from raw vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and nuts.

Based on this slogan at home, we have bought things like Spiralizer, Edamame spaghetti, Vitamix, and many types of vegetables and fruits and that we never ate before asking anyone. I would say jump on this philosophy and start the process of eating raw vegetables and green smoothies and doing a sugar detox of some kind to get an immediate effect, without delay. Don't overthink about taste. Just do it! After a while, as your taste buds develop/recalibrate, you will be able to add more. I am sure you will make some mistakes every week just as I do, but we are teens right! We will come back to the right path soon after if we follow the proper advice in this book and answer the questions I have been asking.

Don't just think and fret about all possible consequences or the entire plan with detail before stepping on to this beautiful path of healthy eating and questioning every time our hand goes out to that food. Analysis paralysis thinking happens when a lot of people think, oh my god! I will never be able to able to get this.

Recently, at an incubator program, I learned the concept called MVP-minimum viable product. The concept is related to my thinking as we understand the needs of our bodies, know the goal is a long healthy disease free life; then we just move on and fine tune while walking towards our goal. In my opinion, the following quote summarizes it beautifully. *“Heads I win and Tails I don't lose much.”* Manish Pabrai's book- The Dhando Investor.

The quote applies very well to our health. If we start this journey and can reach the ultimate goal of 50% calories from raw vegetables, lentils, nuts, and fruits, we win. If we are unable to meet this target and fall short by say 20%. We are still 30% better.

Keep it up. Join me and change the world

“What you do is what matters, not what you think or say or plan.” – Jason Fried, author of Rework

Chapter 19 - How do I do it?

Subconscious mind

It is a teen nutrition book, and I should be giving some recipes, charts and recommend some great dietician or nutritionist. I think you can hire one nutrition expert, but unless you decide and win over your mind, you are fooling yourself. The focus of this book is going to the “why” of teen nutrition. I am sharing what I learn on Body Mind Intellect and Subconscious mind, which by the way is not easy stuff.

My parents have been on this incredible journey of reading books, audios, and videos of various authors on these concepts. I have seen many heated discussions in the car and at home on what they understood from each sentence minute of audio. It's funny to see the same quote being perceived differently. To my benefit, I heard both the stories. I hope some people can understand my plight when I am trying to shut off and look outside and act like I am listening; my dad somehow looks through the rear-view mirror and say, “Fantastic! Did you see,

Shambavi, how beautifully this guy has explained the concept I think we should implement.” I don’t know how he always figured out that I just shut off. Anyways, the benefit of all these years is that I somehow understood these difficult concepts in my simple way and am trying to implement them and I see great results. I am a person who understands concepts in simple terms.

I promised that this book would bring more questions than the solution. These questions will hopefully trigger a thought in our minds You may explore a little more of these concepts. These are very in-depth and philosophical, and I cannot do justice to them at my age and limited knowledge. What I can say for sure is that they are logical and work and I believe in them 100%.

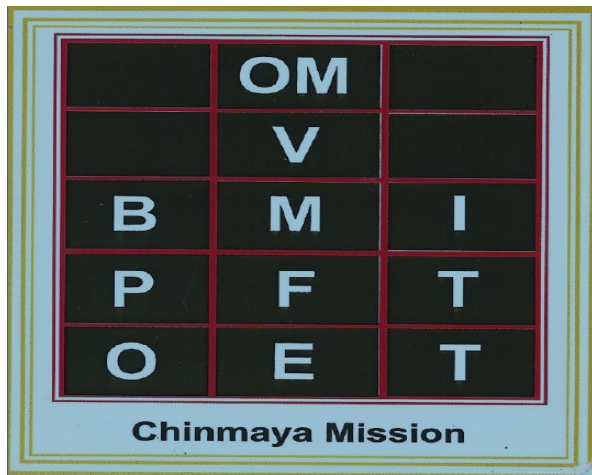
The subconscious mind is developed with education of healthy living and understanding the impacts of the wrong choice. Every time we read well about healthy eating, it gets accumulated in our subconscious mind. The good things will just come up the moment you need it to decide.

There are lots of books, websites and health gurus telling us what to eat and what not to eat. Sometimes

it is conflicting as one website says squash is good and other it says it can be poisonous if juiced with another fruit or vegetable. What to believe or not is a big question for teens and children, especially when we have no context and background from before the internet.

Do I fail? Yes, I do many times a week, but I come back because of concepts like BMI, Sublimation and a few more...Read on!

BMI- Body Mind and Intellect



Growing up, I attended a Bal Vihar (Children Spiritual school) run by Chinmaya Mission (a Spiritual organization). I listened to the commentary of BMI from the founder of this organization, Pujya Guruji Swami Chinmayanada, who explained this concept extremely well. The explanation and BMI concept help drive across a point about how we should live life. I have this poster in my study room as a constant reminder, and every time I show signs of slipping, here comes a lecture from my dad reminding me of BMI. Both of us try to follow this chart (my dad has it on his office wall) on different applications in our lives. I think to some extent it has now become a little part of my life at least for healthy eating.

BMI as explained as per online resources of Chinmaya Mission:

“The physical body, the densest aspect of the human personality, contains the five organs of perception and the five organs of action. The size and shape of the body differ from individual to individual, but the essential material composing it and the functions of the organs are common to all. Again, the subtlest aspect, the Consciousness, which is the core of man's composite personality, is one and same in all

human beings. The variable factor in man is the mind and intellect equipment.

The mind is the seat of impulses and feelings, and it is common to all living creatures. Animals also possess a mind, but man alone can discriminate and analyze his feelings as and when they arise. He alone can allow his actions to be guided and directed by his power of discrimination instead of being driven and carried away by momentary impulses and feelings. This faculty of discrimination, this power of judgment, this capacity to discern what is to be done and what is to be avoided, is the function of the intellect.”

Even though this is a complicated concept, all teens will benefit from a simple understanding of this profound aspect of our life. I am sharing how I understood it and what works for me. You may think that it's a fight between our Body, Mind, and Intellect - Intellect being supreme should guide the other two. I am only 10% into understanding it, but I see lots of success already.

The most important thing in the BMI concept is whether you are listening to your mind or intellect.

To those small, daily decisions about your fitness, are you listening to your mind or your intellect?

The understanding that if we blindly follow the mind, then maybe we are just animals, is a compelling feeling for me. Animalistic is a word we use at home too much to explain a situation where we just followed our mind's feeling and desires about food, and we ate without looking at the consequences.

Like I mentioned before, there are three primary faculties that each of us is born with: Body, Mind, and Intellect. We draw our emotions and preferences from the mind, while intellect gives us the ability to reason, rationalize and think for ourselves.

We need our body to take an action. The body is fed and kept in great shape only if we eat right. As the following questions suggest, every daily action is dressing, or shopping or washing clothes.

“Will you wash your favorite dress instead of dry cleaning or without reading the label?”

“Will you wear sneakers with dress/suit and go to your favorite party?”

“If you or your parents don’t take care of car properly, will it run smoothly and increase its longevity.”

We always spend more time on our clothes, shoes, makeup than our health and what we eat. My recommendation to every teen and pre-teen is to start asking questions about whatever we eat. Qualify through the intellect, not your mind.

Intellect is improved with a lot of knowledge we accumulate in our subconscious mind which later helps us into our daily decisions on food.

So how does this play between body, mind, and intellect many times a day? As an example, when I went to my tutoring every day after school, I passed by a Starbucks. I love to sit, relax and eat a spinach wrap or a bagel almost every day. It became a habit, and I started following the steps unconsciously to Starbucks every day much just like animals follow their regular pattern every day. Then one-day Intellect questioned. The play went like this daily:

Mind says:

“Spinach wrap is good and tastier, and spinach is healthier.”

“What wrong will one wrap will do?”

“Today was tiring at school; I deserve one rush of sugar through a brownie.”

“If I eat a bag of chips now, I will shed the same in my gym; one bag of chips and chocolate will not increase my weight, right?”

“Lunch my parents packed was not my favorite, I deserve one cheat meal.”

Intellect corrects;

“I think a spinach wrap is just for the name. It has very little spinach and rest is just junk food.”

“I have carrots and a banana in my bag for this time; I should eat that first.”

“I should save my calories for my dinner otherwise I will be nutrient deficient but double on calories.”

“I should take care of my health, naturally glowing skin and reduce hair loss, and need for makeup.”

Body seems to be the wrong fellow in the fight between mind and Intellect. It receives calories and responds to whatever we put in it. I have learned that it is just a vehicle like a car, which is getting good or bad food fuel based on who wins between mind and intellect.

Suppression vs Sublimation

There are times when there is no junk food like chips, chocolates or ice creams at our home. My father has a habit of going to the pantry/kitchen, opening the refrigerator and hoping something is there, but how can we find anything if we did not buy it. But you know the hope is always there. It happens a few times a day. But then the day we get something, he attacks them as if there is no tomorrow. My mother suffers as she cannot keep this type of snack (junk) food at home knowing it will be finished soon after it arrives.

I have heard her constant reminder to my dad with a word called “Sublimation.” I added this new word in my vocabulary a few days back. It is a profound word that is used by spiritual people a lot but has a lot of application and significance to our lives. It directly helps our goal of healthy eating and controlling the urge to binge eating or eating processed foods

The understanding of this word is possible only with another word “Suppression.”

Here is an explanation I found from Chinmaya Mission resources:

“Distinction between suppression and sublimation: So long as an individual lives at the level of the senses and does not appreciate the higher values of life, it would be detrimental for one to take to self-denial and suddenly and forcibly give up sense pleasures. If one does so, one will merely be suppressing inherent tendencies, which cannot but erupt with greater force at a later time. Suppression, therefore, results from an independent and forceful self-denial based upon blind belief, untrained enthusiasm, or from sheer superstition. However, if a seeker practices self-restraint and simultaneously educates oneself with the knowledge of the higher values of life, the mental vision and capacity widens and develops continually. When one’s vision is thus developed and maintained, the lower animalistic tendencies automatically disappear like the mist before dawn. This is called sublimation. Sublimation, therefore, is the elimination of some of the known false values of the mind as a result of intellectual conviction and conscientious persuasion. Suppression degenerates an individual’s mental attitude while sublimation improves and

strengthens it thereby enabling the individual to be a greater and mightier personality”

This chapter delayed my book for a few days as I wanted to do justice with this powerful and difficult concept. After a lot of research and discussion I have understood that “Suppression” is forced self-denial similar to what we do with Diets and come back to old ways of eating and weight and nutrition deficient food the moment the diet is over. “Sublimation” is a natural elimination process through right understanding, clarity of vision, intellectual conviction and dedicated efforts guided in right direction. You can also think of Sublimation as being aware of nutrition rich and deficient food and the consequences of our choices. The path to sublimation requires us to understand the food and its long-term impact on our lives. It's hard to follow, but if we are driven by intellect instead of a reckless and wavering mind, it leads to a long healthy life, glowing skills, beautiful hair and a sharp brain.

So my message to all the teens and pre-teens is to follow the path of sublimation and not suppression. It can only happen with being aware and the suppression comes back like spring will bounce back

if we press it hard. We can suppress our food habits through diets and control a couple of options here and there, but the long lasting benefits come from understanding the cause and effect of this urge to eat junk food and not to get 50% of our calories from Raw vegetables and foods.

Hope you join this incredible journey or transforming ourselves and help our fellow teens worldwide with the education and skills to combat against the Evils and devils that pull us towards the junk food with the help of subconscious mind, BMI and sublimation concept

Fight between Good and Evil, Triumph and Defeat

Ravan aa gaya! I have heard this comment thousands of times since I was a little kid every time I threw a tantrum to get something unreasonable (from my parent's perspective). In English, we can understand that Ravan is Evil which is defeated by Good. (Rama), although Ram and Ravana has a religious significance.

Another way of understanding this important comment is that there is always Triumph and Defeat.

Our job is to stand on guard against Evil and Defeat so that they don't enter our subconscious minds and make us their puppets. Defeat and Evil come in the form of Travel Channel food programs or Food network, which glorify junk and greasy food and make us seek that kind of food. They make us feel that without eating this kind of food we are losing something important and that life is not complete without it. Another way Defeat attacks us is through advertisement, society, and customs. Like I said before, we need to question whether it is Ladoo, Halwa or Cake. Ask why I am eating it. Why is it required? Be on guard; I have listened to all kinds of stories about why a particular sweet/dessert is eaten on a given day.

While guarding yourself, you can fend off the attacks; we can only win over Defeat and Evil if we educate ourselves with knowledge about the kind of food we eat every time, each day. The knowledge and wisdom generated will help us win our daily battles.

James Clear's "[Outer ring](#)" strategy & 5 ingredient rule"

I am excited to see this idea from James Clear on his website and have started to incorporate in my strategy to overcome the temptations of eating junk food. He states

“First, you can use my [“outer ring” strategy](#) to avoid processed and packaged foods at the grocery store. If you limit yourself to purchasing foods that are on the outer ring of the store, then you will generally buy whole foods (fruits, vegetables, meat, eggs, etc.). Not everything on the outer ring is healthy, but you will avoid a lot of unhealthy foods.

You can also follow the “5 ingredient rule” when buying foods at the store. If something has more than 5 ingredients in it, don't buy it. Odds are, it has been designed to fool you into eating more of it. Avoid those products and stick with the more natural options.”

You may decide to implement BMI, sublimation, outer rings or 5 ingredient rule or all of them like I am. The idea is to embark on a journey yourself and help your fellow teens so that we can help each other to improve our health and all teens worldwide. The

path to change our habits along with my fellow teens worldwide is tough but can become fun if you start following it for some time. After a while, it becomes a habit. I welcome you all to join in my journey to help change the world. You can reach me at:

Email - mynutritionmeter@gmail.com

Blog - <http://mynutritionmeter.wixsite.com/nutrition>

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